

# Preparing for the Party Jesus is Giving

*Building Core Strength*

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**Bible Text:** Luke 14:1-24

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Any time there is a player draft in major league sports the focus on selecting just the right person becomes intense, isn't it? One sports writer, Andrew Sharpe, said this in an article entitled "The Science of the NFL Draft: What Makes a True Draft Day Winner." He said, "Really and truly it is unlike any other spectacle in sports. Just imagine in all your head, start with a bunch of college kids becoming millionaires on national television. Add tens of thousands of rowdy fans on hand to cheer what is essentially a glorified cattle auction. Throw in representatives from 32 teams sitting anxiously in front of the draft stage constantly working the phones and then rushing up to the front of the room to hand off their pick to representatives from the NFL before the gigantic clock at the top of the room reads zero. And finally picture a never ending avalanche of analysis from commentators on two gigantic television sets 10 feet away from each other, both talking about the same four or five story lines for three days straight all happening in one room all at the same time. That is the NFL draft."

What a spectacle, huh? But I think we would all agree with this premise. In sports, generally the team that has the best players is going to win the most games. So figuring out in advance who the best player is, is a crucial piece of that puzzle.

One professor even wrote his doctoral dissertation on that very issue at Ohio University. He got tired of the Cleveland Browns being so bad year after year after year, so he decided to design a computer program to make the selection process more scientific. So the team feeds in all sorts of statistical data about the prospective player and the program determines the best pick using a point system that evaluates each and every available athlete.

In case you are interested, it uses the heuristic evaluation of artificially replaced teammate system and it actually spits out an end value generated to represent a player's ability to affect the number of games that team would now win if they select that particular person.

And so for your service, pastors, if pastor Folden received a score of 1.5 in that system, what that would mean was if you drafted him, your team would win one and a half more

games than if you hadn't drafted him. You could decide what you think about that particular part of the illustration. But that is it and it is big business for sure.

And as crazy as all this sounds, it is really not hard to make the point that making the right decision can make all the difference in the world. Is that a fact? And if you follow football you probably recognize these two men. Frankly, if you don't, I am not sure you are going to heaven, but not that I like football or anything. But before I say anything negative about maybe one of them let's just point out that they are each 1000 times better at football or anything else than I will ever be, ok? So the stats I am about to share need to be taken in that light.

But go back to the 1998 draft and the two top quarterback prospects were Ryan Leaf from Washington State and Peyton Manning from Tennessee. Both of them had been outstanding performers in college. Leaf was even a finalist for the Heisman trophy. So the debate was fierce about which quarterback ought to be selected first. And many thought it ought to be Ryan Leaf. They said he had a stronger arm and, therefore, greater potential.

A lot of people also concluded that it really didn't matter. They said, "Look, both of them are going to be starts in the NFL, so you couldn't go wrong either way."

Well, what happened? With the first pick the Colts selected, yeah, thank you for remembering. Peyton Manning gives me confidence in this congregation's spirituality. They selected Peyton Manning. So Leaf fell to number two and was picked up by San Diego. And the Chargers then signed Ryan Leaf to a four year contract worth 31 and a quarter million dollars including an 11 and a quarter million dollar signing bonus. That would be a happy day, huh, which at that time was the largest signing bonus ever paid to a rookie.

Ryan Leaf later stated on that day, "I am looking forward to a 15 year career of a couple of trips to the Superbowl and a parade through downtown San Diego."

Well, his prediction was a little off, huh? In the first 10 games of the 98 season he threw two touchdown passes and 13 interceptions. He was consequently benched. The next year he was injured. He was eventually released by the Charges in 2001 after winning four games in three years as a starter.

Compare that with the career of Peyton Manning, 11 time pro bowler, a four time league MVP, Superbowl champ and Superbowl MVP.

The point is in the world, knowing how to choose the right player is a crucial aspect of winning games. We would all agree with that premise, right? Sure.

Now this isn't a sermon on how to make the best selections for your fantasy football team this fall. But it does set up, I think, the opportunity to consider a very important question. Is it possible to believe that that is also the way it works in the Church of Jesus Christ

where we think we can know in advance the kind of people that God is going to use and the kind of people that he won't? And therefore we are willing to invest our time and our resources, both as individuals and as a church in certain kinds of people based on that belief. And it turns out in the end to be all wrong. Where in the final analysis we spend time on individuals who ended up not being very excited about the things of God anyway or committed to what Jesus was doing in his world today and, on the other hand, missed opportunities to build relationships with some people that God may have wanted to use in the accomplishment of his will. Is it possible to get all of that wrong?

Now let's back up logically for a moment just to be sure we all understand what is at stake here. The Bible is clear that God working out a plan of redemption in his world. Would we all agree with that? When I say play of redemption I am not talking about charts and graphs and initiatives. We are talking about a person, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And because of his death, burial and resurrection it is possible for men and women to actually be forgiven of our sin and brought into an intimate personal relationship with God. That is the plan. That is the mission. That is the goal. That is what redemption is all about.

And when a person chooses to become part of that plan, when they choose to trust Christ as Savior and Lord, that relationship is so personal that it can be likened to becoming part of God's family or, even in Scripture, like attending a dinner party that Christ has prepared. See, this isn't rules. This isn't ritual. It is not religion. It is like participating in a meal that Christ himself has prepared or being on a team that God himself is preparing and he actually wants you to be at the party. He wants you to be on the team. We are going to see that in multiple ways this morning.

Now one other very important aspect of that is once you have trusted Christ you get to be involved in other people joining the team. You get to invite other people to the party. And what I mean by that is directing them to the same kind of joyful relationship in Christ that you already possess. I am talking about us having the privilege of participating in the redemptive plan of God. And please tell me you want to be right in the middle of that. You want to be right in the middle of whatever God is doing in our community, whatever God is doing in our world. And we would consider it an honor and a privilege to ever have a positive spiritual impact on another person in our life. We want to be strong in that endeavor and getting stronger.

Well, here is the rub. Our effectiveness in serving God in this way can really be diminished if we are confused about what kind of players the Lord might want on his team. There are certain tendencies that we have to avoid and certain qualities we have to possess in order to prepare for the party that Jesus is giving. That is what I would like to talk with you about this morning.

Open your Bible if you would now to Luke chapter 14. And if you don't have a Bible with you or you just have your... just trouble finding the way around the Bible you brought, pull out the one from under the chair in front of you and turn to the back section, the New Testament to page 59 and that will bring you to Luke 14 this morning.

So Luke chapter 14 or page 59 in the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

Now the reason we set this study up the way we did this morning is because Christ is about to use this metaphor of preparing for a party throughout this chapter to help us understand our role in the accomplishment of his redemptive plan. And it really is an incredible privilege to be part of that. I hope you see it that way. And we want to be sure we get it right. So as I read please begin looking for three principles to help us participate wisely in God's plan of redemption. Luke chapter 14 beginning at verse one.

"It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread..."<sup>1</sup>

So there was some sort of a dinner party being given.

...they were watching Him closely. And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" And they could make no reply to this.

And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 14:1.

When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses."<sup>2</sup>

See, apparently they were all fired up about bringing the wrong people to the party.

The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'<sup>3</sup>

Same group we heard about earlier in the text.

"And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'<sup>4</sup>

Preparing for the party Jesus is giving and with three principles to help us participate wisely at God's plan of redemption. Here is where it starts. Don't complicate the message with man made rules. Oh, we need to hear that. We need to talk about that this morning.

Now let me preface a bit of this by just telling you something I hope you know well. I love the Church of Jesus Christ. I consider it an honor and a privilege to work full time with the people of God. I am also thoroughly committed to the notion of a pastor's job being to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. So instead of this view that suggests, well, if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself. No, a pastor has to love to select and train and equip and deploy others to serve the Lord in Christ's church and we have hundreds and hundreds of faithful men and women who get that and do it well. But did you sense a but coming?

Yeah, one of the strange phenomena that I have observed over the years is there were some people as soon as they are given any kind of responsibility in the church there is these twin glands that start secreting legalistic hormones. One of them that seeks to make

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 14:1-18.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 14:18-21.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 14:22-24.

up as many rules to govern that new ministry as possible. And the other to create the bossiest sounding sign imaginable and post it in a way that lets everybody around know exactly who is in charge. And the point is some people love to make up standards in addition to the Bible and that is the key. Love to make up standards in addition to the Bible and then judge others who don't measure up.

We are not interested in that person. We are not interested. They can't come to the party. They can't be on the team, because they don't fit my thing. See, that is what was happening at the beginning of this particular text. The religious leaders had all these man made laws about what could and couldn't be done on the sabbath. And verse one says:

“It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread...”<sup>5</sup>

We are going to have some sort of dinner party that this man is throwing. What were they doing? They were watching him closely. See, there it is. They were not enjoying the party. They are not enjoying the meal. They are not enjoying the people. It is all about whether or not Jesus is going to violate one of their sacred spiritual cows.

See, some people are all about that, all about that. And the problem is Legalism seldom works in real life. See, reality has a way of exposing the foolishness of all these rules. And the Lord sets all is up to try to powerfully prove that point and it is because Legalism gets in the way of showing compassion to people who are hurting. Here is a man at the party with a significant physical disease. It is indentified in the Scripture as dropsy. And we don't know for sure exactly what that disease was. Some people think that it was a kind of disease that caused people to retain fluid and may be connected to some forms of cancer. We don't know that for sure, but that is really not the issue. The issue is that the man was in serious trouble physically for sure.

And imagine. Put yourself in his sandals for a moment. Imagine if you are him and you are just hoping and praying that Jesus will heal you right now today. And you also hope that the people in your community who are at this party already, they will be on your ... they will be on your side. They will be saying to Jesus, “Please do it for him and let him come to the party. Please do it right away. If you can heal him, Jesus, please do it.”

But instead the people in your own town, the people who know you, the people who have watched you suffer, because of their Legalism—there it is—have snarled up their faces and in essence say, “That person is not welcome. And, Jesus, you had better not do it now, because that would violate one of our rules and make you less spiritual than us.”

Legalism makes a person crazy like that. Legalism causes you to major on the minors. Imagine caring more about your little standard or preference than this man's deliverance. And do you know what? Some people who will hear this message this morning if they were honest they can imagine that really well. Imagine caring more about your little standard or you little preference outside of the Bible than on somebody else's deliverance

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 14:1.

in this community. Legalism makes you major on the minors and ultimately it takes your focus off the mission.

It is so sad that this text reports that when Jesus directly speaks to him, “Should I heal him or not? Tell me. You get to call. Should I heal him or not?” What did they have the courage to conjure up? Like nothing in verse four.

“But they kept silent.”<sup>6</sup>

And then verse six.

“And they could make no reply to this.”<sup>7</sup>

They couldn’t bring themselves to speaking on behalf of this man who was in trouble. They didn’t really care about having him on the team or letting him enjoy the party. It made no difference to them.

Now here is why all of this is important to us right now to us. We are not talking about some people 2000 years ago. We are talking about us. I made the comment the last week or so that we are getting ready for fall readiness. Have you been thinking a lot about fall readiness? Please tell me you have been having trouble eating your food or sleeping at night, because you are thinking a lot about fall readiness. And what does that mean? Well, fall readiness is the fact that new year’s day for a church like this really is the end of August. We are in a lot of ways connected to an academic calendar especially because we are so close to Purdue University, but just in general that is the way things are. And so we are about to enter a phase of time where people are putting their children back in school and, as a result, they are more open than ever to consider attending a church or visiting a church or getting their families in church, maybe for the first time. Couple that with just statistical fact that for whatever reason God has allowed us the last several months to have larger attendances here even in the summer than ever before. Add to that just the attention that goes with what is going on at Faith West. And for whatever reason God is blessing our church family with a lot of persons who are coming here who are new. And we want to be ready this fall. We want to be on the game at the end of August. Is that right? That is what we mean by fall readiness, being thinking through and being prepared, being trained up so that whenever anybody visits this church, whenever anybody attends this church or has exposure to us as individuals or to one of our ministries, what they are challenged by is not one of our silly rules. It is not something that we added to the Bible. What they are challenged by is the truth of the biblical gospel, that the importance of admitting one’s sin and then trusting Christ as Savior and Lord. And I am saying that if we are going to be factor in leading others to the party that Jesus is giving, a life of peace and joy and satisfaction and direction, we are going to have to keep all our legalistic ideas and standards and equations out of the way. Right? Right.

Now you might say, “Well, pastor Viars, I am not tempted to be legalistic.”

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<sup>6</sup> Luke 14:4.

<sup>7</sup> Luke 14:6.

This would be me giving you the face. Ok? If you are not exactly sure the pastoral dynamic going on right now really. Really? Here is just a few ways your Legalism could come out and you would want me to list some right now, wouldn't you? Yeah, because we are here to let the Word of God help us be in the best position where we can serve God well. So you want me to talk about this right now, don't you, in detailed ways.

I thought so, which is really handy, because that is what I intend to do. Now as a caveat, there is nothing wrong with you establishing all sorts of rules or standards for yourself or for your family. There is nothing wrong with all of that. That is not what I am talking about. But we are talking about things that are not clearly taught in the Scripture being brought into the church house as a test of somebody else's spirituality. Well, that person is not welcome here because they don't agree with me on my little this. That person can't be part of the team, because they don't agree with my little that. Do you understand the problem? Legalism can get our eyes off of the mission. That is the point, just like it was in this text.

So let me tell you how that could happen even this fall. One of them would be your political preferences. Hey, we are having an election this fall. I don't know if you heard about that. On all sorts of different levels. And I would just ask you. Does the Bible tell you who to vote for definitely in every election this fall? And here is the answer in case you don't know the answer. No. It doesn't tell you that. You can have your beliefs on all these various elections that are going to be held. But let's not confuse politics and the cross. And I have all sorts of people emailing me and talking to me all the time. We ought to talk more about this, blah, blah, blah, blah. And welcome to we are probably not, because we are not going to confuse politics. And you can all sorts of views about that personally that you want to, but unless it is clearly taught in the Word of God, we are keeping that out of here. And that is because God very well may be wanting to call somebody to himself to the ministry of this church or you this fall who might see political things differently than you. Are you ok with that? You need to be ok with that.

Or here is another one, educational options for your children. You may have all sorts of passionate thoughts about that for your ... and that is fine. And so you might think that for you the best thing to do is to have your children in public school. God bless you. Or you think it might be best to homeschool children. Great. I am for it. Or you think it is best to send your children to our school or some other Christian school. Great, great, great, great, great. But does the Bible say there is only one way to educate a child? No, no, no, no. And you might be passionate about your way. Fine. But when you start making that a test of somebody else's spirituality and therefore concluding that well if somebody else differs with me not hat particular issue, I am not as interested in them spiritually or God may not want them on the team and I wouldn't either. There is something bad wrong with that. Do we all agree? Yeah.

Or... say how long is this list? Longer.



How about your entertainment options. You have all sorts of views about, well, my family does this. We don't do that. I do this. I don't do that, et cetera, et cetera. And I hope you do have standards. I hope you do have ideas. I hope you have thought through potential applications of Scripture to entertainment choices. But let's just understand that within the heading of Christian liberty there is some room within to navigate those buoys. Is that right? And so you may make some decisions for you that are different than somebody else. And you can have those rules for yourself, but to bring them into the church house and suggest that I would not be interested in someone else being on the team or coming to the party if they don't agree with me on every last little point. That is what Legalism does in a church and it really can limit our ministry.

Here is another one and I have got a bunch, but there is all these dating and marriage ideas. Every so often I hear something being said or sometimes even being taught in this church by some small group on that subject that I just scratch my head and say, "Where in the world did that come from?" I don't even believe that. I have never even thought that and yet it is being taught by somebody authoritatively around here as if that is the only way to do it when that idea could not be remotely found in the Word of God. And there is nothing wrong with you having your thing. But keep it your thing in your house. Don't be bringing it into God's house. Unless you can demonstrate that objectively by the... there might be different ways to date than your thing.

Or this, dietary fads. I am telling you. There are more diets out there. If you really loved God you would be off of this or you would on that or blah, blah, blah. And if you want to abstain from caffeine as part of a full body cleanse, God bless you, but stay away from my Starbucks or I am going to cut you. I mean, that is just all there is. Don't tweet that. I learned that in Gary. But...

It is a point. And I could make... the list is a lot longer. Are you kind of getting the point? Legalism could cause you to conclude that God can or won't use a particular person because they differ with you one of these man made issues. Therefore you are not going to reach out to that kind of person. You are not going to befriend that kind of person this fall. You are not going to invest time in that kind of person this fall. You are not going to draft him on your team. You are not going to welcome them to the party. When God wanted to do a marvelous work of grace in and through them, had you and I not gummed up the works with our Legalism.

Let's do everything that we can in the next several weeks to just evaluate our hearts on that point.

Now what does Jesus' next observation teach us about all of this is to carry ourselves with humility as we seek to serve the Lord. It looks very clear about what is transpiring here.

"And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 14:7.

There is this tendency on the part of the selfish guests to participate in the party regarding what is in it for me. How can I receive attention? How can I receive honor? How can I receive praise? What that fails to recognize is the end of the table is often the best place to serve God. That is why Jesus said when you are invited go and recline at the last place and you might eventually be elevated. You might not. But that is not the purpose of going to the party anyway, is it? We are serving God in an attempt to honor him and to elevate him and to further his purposes and achieve his desires.

I would encourage you to be thinking about this question right now and in these coming weeks. What is the next step in your spiritual journey that needs to be taken between now and the end of August and that could help you more meaningfully participate in what God is trying to accomplish in your life and in our church's ministry for Christ this fall? And then this. Here is the corollary to that that is so important. Are you willing to humble yourself and commit to taking this step in the next few weeks so we are ready to serve the Lord well in these coming days?

Now you might say, "Well, what would that look like?"

That is a good question. Let's talk about that. What might that look like? It is probably for some who will hear this message today a willingness to acknowledge I am not even sure I am on the team. I am not sure there has been a definite time in my life where I have admitted my need and placed my faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. Well, if you have never done that, I would encourage you to do that today. And yes that requires humility. There may be some people in your life who might shun you for that. I understand that. But that is what it means to become a follower of Christ is to admit that you cannot save yourself.

And if you say, "Well, I have got some questions about that," I would encourage you to set up a time with pastor Folden, your service pastor or one of the rest of us and we will be happy to get those questions answered, but even that might be a step of humility for you, but that is what is required in order to serve God and the team well.

It might be planning to take our intro to faith class or one of our other faith community institute classes this fall. And if you would say, "Well, I am not sure I am interested in any of those topics, or I am not sure I would like the other people taking the class," bingo. That is exactly what we are talking about. Is it about your convenience and about your preference or is it about you humbling yourself and therefore being in a position to be used to bring others to the party? It might mean planning to serve in one of our youth or children's ministries on Sunday morning or Wednesday night.

Somebody might say, "Well, yeah, and interrupt my schedule to hang out with a bunch of little kids, especially some of these kids from the community that are coming who don't know anything about how to behave?"

Well, where is often the best place to serve God? It is at the end of the table. Just humbly serving. And there may never be any applause or may never be any recognition, any thanks. It may be a hassle many Sunday mornings for you or inconvenient for you many Wednesday nights. I get that. Humble people understand that is part of what is involved in living for God. That is part of what is involved in serving God.

But I will tell you, hearing 10 or 15 years later that young person after high school graduation saying, “Because of what a Sunday school teacher taught me when I was a kid or one of these Wednesday night clubs workers or one of these league workers or whatever it is, because of something they said, that turned my life around and had a dramatic impact on me spiritually. That makes it all worth it.”

And if nothing else, hearing from the mouth of our Savior some day, “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” you will never be there unless you are willing to carry yourself with a level of humility that understands the party was never about me anyway. And Jesus values that because he knows a lot about humility, doesn’t he?

Philippians 2:5.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>9</sup>

And if you would say, “Well, pastor Viars, in order for me to live and think and act the way that we are talking about this morning, I would have to be a lot closer to the Lord than I am now. I would have to be a whole lot more like Jesus than I am right now.”

Great. The assignment is work hard on that between now and the end of August. It is that important.

Now lastly—and this is really the real punch, I think, of where this text ends—it is remember that the family God is assembling is intentionally diverse. And, see, Jesus continues likening his kingdom to a dinner party and he tells of a man who has invite many people, but they all have excuses for not attending. And, of course, in that context, Christ is referring to these religious leaders who were choosing to reject his message. And the master’s response is, “Well, fine. Go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in her the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.” That is why the kingdom of God is not like the NFL draft. Frequently in God’s economy it is the team filled with people who knew their only hope was the grace of God who wins.

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<sup>9</sup> Philippians 2:5-8.

And many times it is impossible to know in advance who God might use. And that is why we don't want Legalism to get in the way of that work. We don't want pride to get in the way of that work.

In fact, I want to encourage you, everybody here. As you think about the fall, I want to encourage you to purposely plan time in our life for people who may not be able to reciprocate your love. That is one of the key phrases found in verse 14. And you will be blessed as they do not have the means to repay you.

Another way of saying that is be open to God using you in the life of someone who may not be your first choice. And if you are thinking, boy, this fall I hope God brings some other people who are just like me so I can be comfortable around them and I can have a natural affinity to them and I can have more friends that just fit right... I hope you are thinking the exact opposite of that. Be open to God using you in the life of someone who may not be your first choice.

Now are you asking God right now? Are you to help you identify what is the ... this isn't just a sermon. This is hopefully a preparation for effectiveness, helping us to become stronger. Are you asking the Lord to help you identify what is the next step for me?

Let me mention some specific takeaways possibly based on some of the good things I see happening in the lives of many in this church. What does this look like in real time?

One, teaching your children to walk into their Sunday school class or their Wednesday night kids of faith group and purposely looking for the child who is new or purposely looking for the child who might be alone or purposely looking for the child who might be different or stand out and to work at befriending that individual.

I would encourage you to make it part of your family DNA to around the dinner table on Sunday afternoon to ask your kids who did you meet today at Sunday school? Who did you meet who was new? How did you befriend them? Did you get up, pick up your paper and your crayons and go sit next to them? Because that is what Jesus wanted you to do. And, yeah, maybe your little group of friends didn't have more time with you that day, but that is what Jesus would have wanted you to do. That is part of what we are talking about.

Or maybe serving in our food pantry or our clothing closet and some good things are happening in that ministry. But maybe part of this for you would be that, of serving in our community's ministry for homeless families. There is some tremendous work being done there. It doesn't require a terrible amount of time, but maybe that is one of the takeaways for you. Maybe you are at the place in your spirituality or your life where it is time to receive some biblical counseling training or eventually maybe it is after your kid are out of the house or maybe it is when you don't have as many demands on your time where you are going to join our counseling center staff either here or at Faith West and say, "I am going to get my hands dirty in the lives of people who may be hurting or may have messed up in a lot of ways and I am going to walk them through over a period of time

what it means to become closer to the Lord and I am going to be friends with all kinds of people in that way who I would have never met naturally. That is fine. Or visiting our shut ins or folks in the hospital.

Or this, coming to church on Sunday morning and attending this service or your ABF in an expectant fashion.

Do you understand what I mean by that, an expectant fashion? Expecting God to do something in your life. Expecting God to use you in the life of somebody else. Don't be screeching into the church house five minutes later. Would you not do that? You don't do that at work, do you? Please tell me you don't. But I hope you will view this as an opportunity to say, "Do you know what? This is the Lord's Day. I don't have to go to work today and so I have the privilege of serving my God and I am wondering how he is going to use me today. And I want to be there early and I want to be there with the heart that says, 'Lord, use me in the life of someone else today. Help my love, help my graciousness, help the way that I reach out, help me to be an instrument in your redemptive hand today and let me not be either Legalism or pride that cause me to fail to reach out to someone that you might want to work in and through me today.'" Coming expectantly.

If you have a young person in our teen groups I want to encourage you to teach them to avoid cliquishness. That ought to never be part of the family of God, like ever. You say, "Well, but they are teenagers. I don't know how much control I have over them."

Really? How about the dinner table? How about whether or to they eat? And what I mean by that is I do wonder sometimes if parents of teens just have the idea I am supposed to just give them everything they want. They wanted new sneakers, so I have got to go by them, blah, blah, blah. Some young people in this culture they don't know a thing about working. They don't know a thing about responsibility. They don't know a thing about understanding the world does not revolve around you. And if you say you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then life revolves around serving him and you are getting old enough to understand that. And part of that even is reflected in the way you function in your youth group. And I want to encourage you to train your children to do that. That needs to be... that is a ...

You say, "Well, I am worried about them getting a good job. I am worried about them getting a good education."

I would be concerned about whether or not they love people. Those other things will fall into line. Let's be sure that we are majoring on the majors, maybe serving in one of our special needs kids or serving with them. That has been a great blessing to our family.

You know, I really want to encourage you. There is so much more I can say about this, but I am so out of time and I was late last Sunday for my other little gig. But I hope you will be here at five o'clock of the groundbreaking for Faith West, because we are wanting to make a statement, a statement that says we are coming to that part of the community to

love on people, to love them in the name of Christ, to try to meet needs, to try to serve them every way we can and then to see how God might choose to work in and through us.

I know many people in this church get exactly what I am talking about. That is why we have gotten to where we are, humanly speaking. Thank you for that. let's all check our hearts, check our actions to be sure that we are ready for the fall.

Dustin, would you come and pray for us?